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ABSTRACT

This document aims to help teachers make the transition to standards-based teaching and learning. It describes the first phase of a 3-year applied research project on professional development for teaching to high standards in culturally and linguistically diverse middle schools. Standards-based teaching and learning requires teachers to reach a consensus on what students should know and be able to do, and to understand how to teach accordingly. This means that many teachers must make major changes in what they have been doing for years. These problems are especially acute for culturally and linguistically diverse schools. Preliminary findings include the following: teachers need long-term professional development to understand standards and their implications for teaching English language learners, and they need the necessary time to explore attitudes about language, culture, and race that might influence their teaching, as well as explore new ideas and connect them to classroom practice; teachers need the skills and capacity to build useful and trusting relationships among English-as-a-Second-Language, bilingual, and English language arts teachers, and among insiders at the local level and outsiders from the Lab at Brown staff; and district and school development policies must conceive and implement policies that support coherent and integrated professional development. (Contains 26 references.) (KFT)

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Implementing Standards with English Language Learners: Initial Findings from Four Middle Schools

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Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory At Brown University (LAB)

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The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), based in Washington, D.C., is a LAB partner organization.

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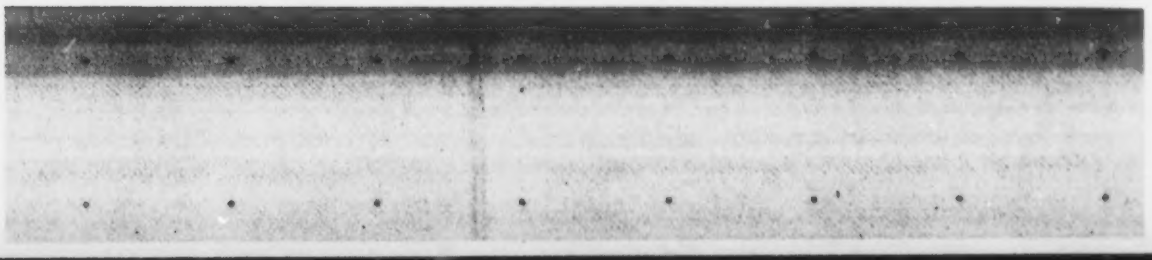

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Introduction

As school reform takes hold, the standards movement has reached beyond development and moved into classrooms. Like any reform, standards are only as effective as the people who implement them. Yet that implementation process is likely to place an enormous burden on teachers. Standards-based teaching and learning essentially requires teachers to reach consensus on what students should know and be able to do and understand how to teach it. Many teachers will need to make changes in ways they have been teaching for years. Some must learn to teach in ways that they may not have experienced as learners, while others must revise instructional strategies that they had previously never questioned. All teachers are being asked to learn on the job.

The challenges of standards implementation are particularly acute for culturally diverse schools (August & Hakuta, 1997; McLaughlin & Sheppard, 1995). In culturally diverse schools, standards implementation presses teachers to come to terms with attitudes about language, culture, and race and about how linguistic and cultural backgrounds may influence cognitive processes (Garcia, 1994). Standards implementation presses schools to provide access to challenging curricula for all students. How can the promise of high standards for all children be realized when many teachers are inadequately prepared to serve linguistically and culturally diverse student populations and when many schools provide challenging curricula to only a few (NCTAF, 1996)?

Clearly, implementing standards in culturally diverse schools calls for professional development. And while there is a growing body of research on professional development approaches that facilitate school

reform (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Renyi, 1996), more needs to be known about the experiences that teachers and supervisors need in order for standards developed at the state or district level to translate into appropriate classroom practice. Furthermore, no research exists to date that specifically looks at standards implementation efforts with English language learners.

This paper describes the first phase of a three-year applied research project on professional development for teaching to high standards in culturally diverse middle schools. It reports preliminary findings, and it suggests implications that are relevant for other researchers, school administrators, professional developers, and teachers.

The Context

The standards implementation project in Lowell, Massachusetts, has been influenced by new policies and shifting demographics at the national, state, and local levels. Like many other states intent on improving education for K-12 students, Massachusetts began developing curriculum frameworks (that is, state standards) in 1993 as a cornerstone for school reform. The development period took approximately three years and involved teachers, parents, administrators, and concerned citizens from across the state. Despite public participation, development of the frameworks ignited political controversy, echoing the national standards debate about social studies and English language arts in particular. Questions concerning what gets taught, how it gets taught, and who makes the decisions were debated in public hearings, board meetings, and editorials. Simultaneously, a bill was introduced in the Massachusetts legislature to dismantle the state's 16-year-old Transi-

tional Bilingual Education law. The threat to this programmatic option for some English language learners was criticized by many educators. Prospects for reaching consensus on standards and for meeting the educational needs of English language learners were uncertain.

Even before all of the state curriculum frameworks had been approved by the State Board of Education, leaders in the Lowell Public Schools had begun to plan for the development of district frameworks that would lead to changes in classroom practice. During the 1995-1996 school year, Lowell convened groups of content area teachers to study the draft state curriculum frameworks and to make recommendations for their implementation. Based on the assumption that the final version of the state's frameworks would not differ significantly from the drafts, the district administration supported framework development the following year.

Lowell provides a living laboratory for standards implementation efforts with students whose first language is not English and whose cultural heritage is not European. Lowell numbers more than 103,000 residents with 15.1% of its families living below the poverty level (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). Throughout the city's history, immigration has been associated with industrial growth. Nonetheless, the surge of Latin American and Southeast Asian immigrants, especially Cambodians, during the 1980s sparked community resentment and placed heavy demands on the school system (Kiang, 1996).

During the 1995-1996 school year, 15,759 students were enrolled in Lowell schools, 27.9% of them Asian American, compared with 3.7% for the state; and 21.7% of them Latino/a, compared with 9% for the state as a whole (Massachusetts Department of Education, 1997). In

1996-1997, transitional bilingual education (TBE) programs served 23% of the student population, offering native language instruction in Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Khmer, and Laotian. The district provided ESL instruction for students speaking one of the 13 low-incidence languages. Between 50 and 80% of the school population were eligible for federally subsidized meals (Quality Counts, *Education Week*, 1997).

Lowell's teaching force is less diverse than its student population. Only 10% of the teachers are Asian or Hispanic; 90% are white (Lowell Public Schools, October 1996). Many teachers received their pre-service training before the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students were being addressed systematically. Some teachers have attended in-service workshops in second language acquisition, but there was no system-wide professional development focused on teaching English language learners within the three years prior to the project's inception, according to district administrators.

Although the district does not monitor the school progress of students who have exited bilingual education or ESL programs, Lowell educators noticed that many of these students were struggling to succeed in mainstream courses. Data from the mid-1990s suggest that high linguistic diversity and poverty correlate with low standardized test scores in Lowell as elsewhere. Lowell students scored below the state average on all measures of the Massachusetts Education Assessment Program (Massachusetts Executive Office of Education, 1996). Raising the standards for learning in content areas threatened to leave these students even farther behind.

The Project

No template exists for providing standards-based instruction, either to students who speak languages other than English and have cultural backgrounds different from those that predominate in North America (August & Hakuta, 1997; McLaughlin & Shepard, 1995) or to any population of students.

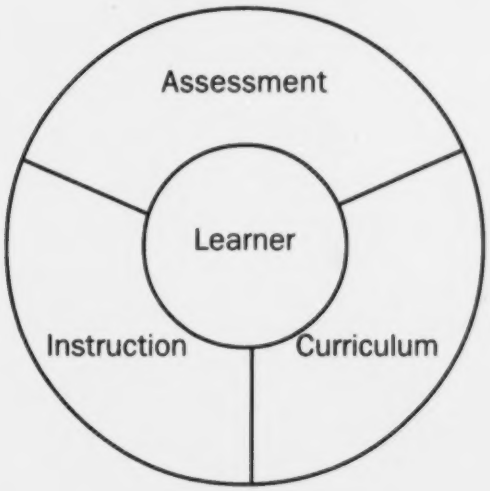
Curriculum development or revision is often considered the first step for implementing standards-based reform, but that need not be the case. As Figure 1 suggests, curriculum, instruction, and assessment all affect learners, and standards implementation involves all three. Cray-Andrews and Millen (1996) suggest that schools should begin standards implementation by addressing their area of greatest need. Thus, if a changing school population (due, for instance, to a rapid influx of a new group of immigrant students) results in teachers wanting to modify their classroom strategies in order to meet the new students' educational needs, then the conversation regarding standards implementation should begin with instruction. If schools are feeling pressure to reform because of dissatisfaction with testing and test scores, then looking closely at assessment practices and results is the place to start. The choice of where to begin implementing standards must be made deliberately and locally.

The design of this project assumes a shared responsibility for standards implementation between the district and the school. Roles of district and school personnel differ, but successful reform efforts require both leadership and local invention (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Wagner, 1997). Shared responsibility implies that the district and its schools

share a common vision for students and are willing to work together, so that, for example, district and school projects do not compete for teachers' time but reinforce common efforts to put standards at the center of reform. At both the school and district levels, standards implementation could be the foundation from which other projects evolve.

Figure 1

Learner Wheel



The design also assumes that a critical mass of competent teachers has the potential to transform a school and district (Hawley & Valli, 1996). This potential may be realized through professional development approaches that deviate from traditional, short-term delivery models. Professional development that is inquiry-based, grounded in school reality, designed with teacher input, rigorous, sustained, and coherent has been shown to facilitate school reforms (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Hawley & Valli, 1996; Little, 1993; Renyi, 1996).

A focus on teachers in standards implementation efforts does not imply that principals and district administrators do not play key roles: they do. Their leadership and support is crucial (Darling-Hammond, 1997). The primary focus of this project is on teachers because their actions have the most direct influence on students, but the project is also concerned with enhancing the ability of the schools and the district to support standards-based instruction.

At the request of Lowell Public Schools, the LAB designed and implemented this research and development project to understand the complexities of standards implementation efforts that purposefully include English language learners. The project is intended both to increase individual and organizational capacity in Lowell and to accumulate understandings that can inform other linguistically and culturally diverse districts that are putting curriculum frameworks into effect in their schools and classrooms.

Research Method

The research involved documenting professional development sessions, school visits, and interviewing with teachers and administrators. LAB staff designed a professional development process and facilitated the sessions, and they used qualitative research methods to address two research questions:

- What issues arise when schools include English language learners in standards implementation efforts?
- What professional development strategies prepare schools to respond to this challenge?

LAB staff kept a running account of presentations, interactions, and teacher questions and responses during professional development sessions. Agendas from these meetings, handouts, and readings were archived. Other data from the sessions were collected by using questionnaires on teachers' learnings and their perceptions of the sessions' relevance to their work. Data were collected at the initial, midpoint, and final sessions so that changes in knowledge and attitudes could be tracked. Other data included flip chart reports from group discussion and journal entries that teachers volunteered. This extensive, on-going documentation and analysis of the professional development helped to shape future sessions and to contextualize monthly visits to classrooms.

Data from school visits included descriptive field notes on classroom interaction and on conversations with teachers and principals. Samples of student work and lesson materials were collected. Other data sources included e-mail between LAB staff and project participants, notes from phone conversations, and teacher writing.

LAB staff used traditional qualitative methods to analyze the data (Erickson, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researchers (Adger, Clair and Short) coded and sorted electronically-stored field notes using a qualitative data management system (FolioViews). Codes and analytic categories were derived from the research questions and themes that arose in early data analysis. The researchers analyzed the data that they had collected individually and compared their results with analytic memos written during data collection and with the questionnaires that teachers had completed to determine the findings presented below.

Year One

Professional development sessions

Professional development was designed to involve Lowell and LAB staff as partners so that the project could respond to needs at the school and district levels and to new understandings and needs as they emerged. This project brought together teams of teachers from four middle schools that had been strongly encouraged by the district administration to volunteer participation. The school teams included 7th and 8th grade English language arts teachers, ESL, and bilingual teachers, and school-based resource teachers (e.g., Title I). Other participants were district level facilitators for Title I, Title VII, and Chapter 636 (Office of Civil Rights) with supervisory responsibilities in the four schools. In all, 31 teachers and facilitators participated during the first year. School-based teachers were designated by the principals, based on their teaching assignments in English language arts, ESL, or transitional bilingual education; and district-based resource teachers were selected by district administrators.

The four LAB staff members who led the project played several roles. As professional developers, they assisted the teacher teams in examining how English language learners can be equitably included in classrooms where standards implementation is occurring; as researchers, they documented and analyzed the process. The LAB staff also maintained contact with the State Department of Education, with Lowell district administrators, and with educators at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell, where the Lowell School District curricula were being developed from the Massachusetts Frameworks.

The district provided space for the professional development meetings, and Title I funds paid for teacher substitutes. These arrangements allowed teachers to participate in professional development during the school day.

Each month, beginning in November 1996, two cohorts of teacher teams from two middle schools met with LAB staff for a full day of professional development. Sessions focused on generating, discussing, and strengthening understandings in four key areas:

- standards-based reform in national and local perspective
- the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for English Language Arts and its connection to school practices
- the educational needs and strengths of English language learners, especially those related to second language acquisition and cross-cultural communication
- instructional practices that promote English language learners' achievement of standards in English language arts.

Teachers and district facilitators read and discussed articles, and session leaders modeled instructional strategies appropriate for middle school classrooms. These strategies included using graphic organizers, structuring cooperative learning tasks, and balancing lecture, guided discussion, and structured group work. In school and cross-school groups, the teachers and district facilitators worked together to critique the Massachusetts English language arts frameworks, raise concerns about implementation, and explore ways that familiar classroom practices could be aligned with the frameworks. In small and whole group arrangements, they asked questions and challenged their colleagues.

They also recorded their reflections in journals throughout the year in which they worked together.

After the first few sessions, LAB staff planned the monthly sessions in response to their own emerging understanding of the district, school, and classroom environments and teachers' feedback (both through interaction and questionnaire comments). (Findings are discussed below.) LAB staff conferred after each professional development session to compare and deepen understanding of the process and to decide on content and materials for future sessions.

School visits

LAB staff visited each school monthly to learn firsthand about the day-to-day realities and provide an opportunity for teachers to discuss teaching and learning. This activity did not use structured observation protocols or feedback procedures for several reasons. Since the LAB staff were new to the district, they needed freedom to gauge the school context—the teachers' interests, needs, and strengths; the students' backgrounds, educational needs, and strengths; and the schools' orientation to school reform. For instance, one school was a member of both the Coalition for Essential Schools and the Carnegie Middle Schools project, while another was not at all active in school reform activities outside of the district projects. Another reason for keeping the classroom visits unstructured was to promote collegiality and trust. LAB staff wanted to ensure that the visits would not seem like evaluations.

These monthly visits were intended to be mutually beneficial, personalizing professional development for teachers and providing LAB staff with opportunities to understand the educational setting in more

detail. Their purpose and nature were negotiated individually throughout the school year. Some teachers determined the purpose of the visits (e.g., "Watch how I work with students on a new cooperative reading technique.") and created time for consultation afterward. Some invited LAB staff to join them in teaching. Others permitted visits but did not seek feedback. LAB staff made extensive field notes during classroom visits, noting details relevant to both teachers' interests and the project's research goals. By referring to these notes, teachers and LAB staff later pursued a shared understanding of classroom events. At the invitation of teachers, LAB staff commented on instructional events relevant to standards implementation with English language learners and sometimes suggested additional techniques or activities. They also conferred with principals informally throughout the year to keep them apprised of the project's evolution.

Planning for Year 2

At the end of the project's first year, teachers and district facilitators were invited to continue participation for a second year. Two teachers declined; one left the school system; and the remaining 28 elected to continue. In June 1997, teachers from the four schools met as a whole group for two half-days to reflect critically on the year's professional development by reviewing selected data and to plan the next year's activities in their schools. The school teams opted to work at their schools, rather than meeting in the two cohorts at the district office. They planned ways of continuing the standards implementation work while responding to their own school's priorities, schedules, politics, and experience with standards and English language learners. They decided

to expand the work beyond English language arts and to invite other teachers at their schools to join them. Four teachers who had transferred to non-participating schools developed individual action research plans so they could continue their professional growth and remain involved with the project. The district facilitators met together to plan their role in the project over the following year; their planning helped the project meet the goal of expanding the district's capacity to conduct professional development that supports standards implementation with English language learners.

Findings

Analysis of data has yielded interrelated findings regarding professional development to support standards implementation with English language learners in living, breathing schools. These preliminary findings have implications for other schools. They confirm and deepen current understandings about standards, professional development, and the educational needs and strengths of English language learners. Further study is needed to understand more fully how the findings overlap and interact with one another.

Time

Teachers need long-term professional development to understand standards and their implications for teaching English language learners. They need time to explore attitudes about language, culture, and race that might influence their teaching of English language learners and to process new concepts and connect them to instruction.

Time to explore attitudes about language, culture and race that are relevant to teaching English language learners

Professional growth for standards-based teaching and learning in culturally diverse schools requires more time than is usually made available in traditional professional development structures.The time requirement is great because teachers need to consider how their beliefs and their actions affect students from varied cultures, language groups, and races in distinct ways. In Lowell, time was needed for teachers to build on previous knowledge, question assumptions about teaching and learning that involves students from a variety of backgrounds, discuss teaching strategies, try out new approaches in the classroom, and reflect on them. Time was needed for teachers to talk together about their learnings and to deepen their understandings. This project involved teachers in approximately 48 hours of professional development sessions over a period of eight months, along with repeated classroom visits by LAB staff and follow-up conversations.

Teachers' discourse provided evidence of professional growth. Over time, teachers framed questions and talked in increasingly sophisticated ways about their instructional practices, the standards, and the educational needs of English language learners. For example, in the early sessions some teachers blamed students for their educational failure: "Students don't come to school to learn"; "Bilingual students in the mainstream classes are reluctant to learn"; "Students don't do homework"; "Students are needy and dysfunctional, and they have multiple problems." In one enlightening exchange, a teacher laid the blame for not learning English better on the students and their families, remarking, "Those students will never learn English. They don't even speak it

at home." A colleague turned to him and said, "I never spoke English at home, either. My family is French-Canadian and we only spoke French. In fact, my elementary schooling was in French." Surprise registered among her colleagues at hearing that she was not a native English speaker. In making the point that speaking English at home is not a condition for school success and learning English, this teacher's story was more compelling than anything the LAB staff could have said about language learning.

As the school year progressed, teachers reflected more deeply on issues that have impact on the school success of English language learners. An English language arts teacher reported thinking about "the concept of second language development and all of the issues that it entails. To understand why my students react to learning in different ways has been a real need in my mind. [I become aware of] the cultural differences that they bring to the classroom...when I look at how they learn. This has caused me to rethink and re-evaluate my practice." Another English language arts teacher noted, "I am still fascinated by the process of language acquisition because, although language is functional, it is much more! It defines us! Who we are and what we want to achieve!"

In one of the cohorts, Anglo teachers' questions and observations about Cambodian students became increasingly forthright during the school year. At first, teachers had seemed tentative in speaking about Cambodian students in the group—wary, perhaps, of offending the two Cambodian bilingual teachers. In their schools, without the Cambodian teachers present, they talked at length about Cambodian students' difficulties with English verb and noun inflectional suffixes (tense and

agreement, plural and possessive), students' unwillingness to speak up in class discussion, and their difficulties with reading comprehension. Finally, in the fifth professional development session, a frank, extended, animated conversation arose regarding structural contrasts between English and Khmer, the language of Cambodia. In the context of reviewing myths about language learning, one participant claimed that learning to form plurals and verb tenses is related to intelligence. By that point in the year, an ethos had developed in the group proscribing simple claims about cultural membership and intellectual ability. The discussion that ensued involved all the teachers; LAB staff remained at the periphery. The Cambodian teachers described the patterns of pluralization in Khmer, and speakers of other languages pointed out their structural contrasts with English. Anglo teachers questioned the Cambodian teachers, who answered at length. One of the non-native English speakers spoke poignantly of problems he had had in learning English. Subsequently, more than one teacher referred to this conversation as a high point of the professional development experience. Not only had the Anglo teachers gained access to a topic about which they had been both curious and frustrated, but they were also relieved to be breaking down inhibitions to conversation about cultural differences.

Time to explore new ideas and connect them to practice

In time, some teachers began working to connect instruction to standards and adapt classroom practices explicitly to address standards with English language learners. As an ESL teacher put it, "I began to understand that what I do now is in a lot of ways following some standard. It is just a matter of connecting [what I do with the standards], determin-

ing which ones I am not addressing, and [working on those]." A few teachers demonstrated the ability to align classroom practice with selected standards, although those teachers rarely discussed practice in those terms. Five months into the project, after a researcher's visit to an 8th grade classroom where students were clearly working on theme, structure, and elements of poetry (Massachusetts English language arts standard 14), the highly competent teacher did not mention standards in the follow-up discussion. However, at the researcher's prompting, the teacher connected the lesson to that standard, and she began to reflect on other lessons and their connections to the standards. Even highly skilled teachers need time to make connections between what they do with their students and the standards.

Relationships

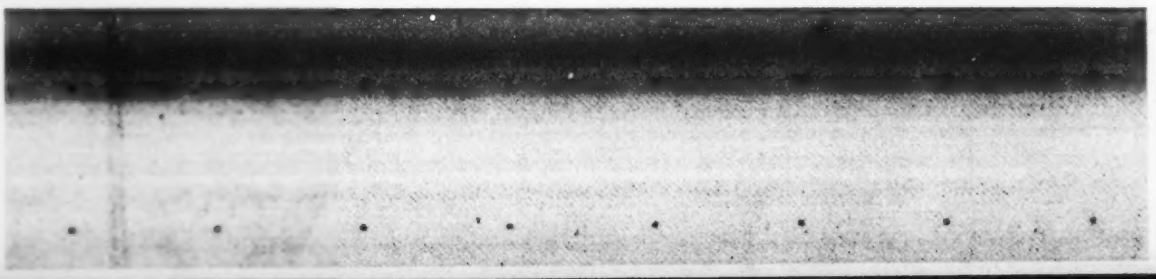
Implementing standards in culturally and linguistically diverse schools is a problem-solving endeavor likely to require new skills and knowledge that cannot necessarily be spelled out in advance. This inherent indeterminacy means that in both content and process, professional development must be flexible and responsive (Clair, 1995). During the first year of this project, building relationships was critical to developing a shared understanding of the complexities of including English language learners in standards implementation efforts.

Relationships among ESL, bilingual, and English language arts teachers

In this project, standards-based professional development requires that teachers talk to each other about what students should know and be

able to do—and, consequently, what teachers should be doing to support students' learning. Working together, ESL, bilingual, and English language arts teachers can enrich each others' understandings about standards, classroom practice, and English language learners. However, strong traditional structures have mitigated the power of standards to improve teacher practice and student learning by limiting such interaction. For example, teachers are often segregated by grade level, subject, or program with little time to discuss teaching and learning. Common planning time may not suffice. In one of the four schools, common planning time brought teachers together in grade level teams for only 20 minutes a day, barely enough time to coordinate schedules and air discipline problems. In another school, where common planning time was scheduled for 45 minutes, the time was often used for special education referral meetings and other procedural needs. Halfway through the year, one school tried to establish significant common planning time one day per week for the grade-level teams to plan together and focus on standards and English language learners. However, outside pressures (meetings with guidance counselors, student discipline proceedings, assemblies, and the like) led them to abandon the practice within weeks. Thus the potential for building professional relationships that can buttress standards implementation in schools does not always come to fruition.

Finding a way to bring together ESL, bilingual, and content area teachers for collaborative attention to English language learners' learning appears to be an obvious step toward enhancing their achievement. Yet despite the fact that these teachers are jointly responsible for



the education of English language learners and the fact that teachers in each discipline have specialized knowledge that is useful to those in the other disciplines, the project teachers had rarely talked substantively across disciplines, or even within disciplines across grades, about serving English language learners. In reflecting on ways to make their schools more responsive to English language learners, an English language arts teacher said, "We need more conversations with bilingual students and teachers to figure out what the problems are and how to resolve them." A district facilitator observed, "I always see it as highly effective to mix mainstream, TBE [transitional bilingual education], and ESL teachers. We need to continue to break down the barriers between different departments." These strong barriers serve to perpetuate misunderstandings regarding differential class size in the different programs, instructional practice, curriculum, and teacher responsibilities for English language learners. They inhibit relationships and curb the spread of knowledge about language and cultural patterns that need to be considered in teaching to high standards.

In the professional development sessions, the school-based separation of the bilingual and ESL teachers from the English language arts teachers—and, in some cases, the alienation of these teachers from each other—seemed to decrease. For example, upon learning that bilingual teachers were responsible for teaching all core subject areas, some English language arts teachers dropped their complaints about low student numbers and assistance from teacher's aides in bilingual classrooms. After viewing a video on effective practices for English language learners filmed in a sheltered social studies and language arts classroom

(Silver, 1995), English language arts teachers commented on the high quality of teaching and high teacher expectations for students that they saw demonstrated. Conversely, ESL and bilingual teachers said that they had been unaware of pressures that the English language arts teachers felt concerning curriculum coverage and assessment practices.

Teachers began to ask one another questions about language and cultural differences that can only be asked if there is a trusting and respectful professional relationship. Some teachers began to seek advice. For example, questions were raised about cultural differences concerning gender (Latino boys' behavior in classes with Anglo female teachers), resolving cross-cultural incidents between Latino and Anglo students, and the existence of a cultural mismatch between school and home. The ESL teachers were particularly eager to share information with their colleagues, especially regarding language acquisition and teaching strategies. They reminded the mainstream teachers that students who exit ESL and bilingual classes needed instructional activities that support language development, such as frequent, structured reading and writing tasks.

It must be recognized that even in this long-term professional development process not all teachers became comfortable discussing language and culture and their influence on student success and that, with the exception of that fifth session, the bilingual teachers in both cohorts were the least vocal of all the participants in whole group discussions. This may be explained by the fact that some bilingual teachers lacked confidence regarding their English proficiency, their teaching experience, or both. There may be cultural explanations for

their reticence to speak in the large group and other reasons connected to the social or institutional marginalization of many bilingual teachers. Nonetheless, they participated fully in small group activities, and they expressed satisfaction with the sessions. During school visits, several of the bilingual teachers regularly discussed topics from the professional development sessions with LAB staff members and commented that they were learning a lot.

Across the year, conversations regarding classroom practice and curriculum showed that teachers were increasingly recognizing one another as resources and seeking assistance. Teachers talked more and more about supporting each other to help students make the transition from bilingual and ESL classes to the mainstream. At the end of the year, the teachers reported that bringing together groups of ESL, bilingual, and content teachers to discuss standards implementation at length is more likely to engender relationships that support collegial learning than are chance interactions at school.

Relationships between Lowell educators (insiders) and LAB staff (outsiders)

Bringing together a diverse group of educators and researchers to work collaboratively toward a common goal required building relationships among educators and researchers at different institutions with different levels of responsibility; reconciling the roles of insiders (school personnel) and outsiders (LAB staff) in Lowell's standards implementation process; understanding contextual considerations at district, school, and classroom levels; and establishing a vocabulary and perspective for discussing standards and the educational needs of English language learners. Building relationships was critical to forging a partnership between the LAB and the district.

Not all of the teachers entered this project willingly. The original design had called for teacher volunteers, but during negotiations with district administrators, it was agreed that principals would select participants based on the needs in their schools. Some teachers were cynical about the professional development approach, either unsure about whether it would benefit them personally or unhappy about being called away from their students for a full day each month. Some questioned the qualifications of LAB staff or anticipated that they might be told to change their practice by someone who would never set foot in their classrooms. There were questions about standards and education reform such as this one written early in the year: "Will standards be around in five years or are they just a fad?" And there were doubts about the possibility of improving English language learners' academic achievement. A few teachers refused to respond to questions in the

initial questionnaire regarding their views of teaching English language learners.

Over the course of the year, many teachers negotiated relationships with LAB staff that nourished their individual professional growth. In a particularly productive case, one teacher asked a LAB staff member to visit the same class repeatedly in order to capture change over time. Before each visit, she briefly oriented the researcher to the lesson and provided an observational focus. After the visit, the researcher and the teacher talked at length about the lesson, sharing perceptions and constructing alternative scenarios, and focusing on standards for writing and speaking. The benefits of what the teacher called a "foreign observer" were extended to the students, who were told that the observer was there "to help the teacher better address the needs of the students" and "to determine how they learned, what they learned, and how they applied their knowledge" (Liston-Romeo, 1997). It became clear that students were performing for the visitor—for example, by using words from their vocabulary list (e.g., "predator") during discussion. "Most importantly, the students were convinced of [the researcher's] and my commitment to improving their education. Concurrently, their expectations for themselves and for one another increased."

Both the interaction in the professional development sessions and the school visits were essential to shaping the professional development process. As an example, many teachers expressed deep concern in both settings about ways of teaching reading in ESL, bilingual, and English language arts classes. LAB staff noticed that frequently English language learners read a text only once, often orally and with limited pre- and

post-reading activities, and that teachers placed greater emphasis on teaching vocabulary words than on developing students' comprehension. The classroom visits and the subsequent conversations with teachers led to greater emphasis in the professional development sessions on reading instruction. In particular, time was spent demonstrating the use of graphic organizers for pre-, concurrent, and post-reading activities. There was discussion of how to select an organizer appropriate to the text structure (e.g., a flow chart to reflect cause and effect) or to the learning objective (e.g., a tree diagram to display traits of a story's main character with supporting evidence). Teachers were guided as they created or identified organizers for sample texts. Experienced teachers shared their strategies for using organizers and other reading techniques they favored. Subsequent classroom visits and chats with teachers revealed that some of them were increasing reading supports.

This emergent design for professional development demanded an unusual level of reciprocity among the LAB staff and the teachers. Everyone working together—LAB staff, teachers, and district facilitators—had to build knowledge jointly about what it takes to implement standards in classrooms with English language learners. The LAB staff were able to help translate the research base on effective strategies and approaches. The teachers and district facilitators provided insider knowledge of their schools, the curricula, their instructional strategies, and their students. In concert, participants created teacher learning experiences with relevance to the specific needs of the four Lowell schools.

The reciprocal and flexible nature of this work contrasts with the traditional one-way model of professional development—in which teachers receive information from expert outsiders who provide an

intervention. Given the usual socialization of teachers (Clair, 1995, 1998; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988), it is not surprising that some teachers initially resisted something other than the traditional workshop. One commented on the mid-year questionnaire, "Your sessions are good, but I need more stuff." This comment reflects the prevailing assumption that there are simple, technical answers to complex educational challenges and that experts should tell teachers what works and how to do it.

Policy

District and school professional development policies influence teachers' ability to implement standards. Since standards implementation in linguistically and culturally diverse schools is for the most part uncharted territory, policies must be supportive, coherent, and flexible enough for schools to invent (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

Policies that support coherent and integrated professional development

Despite the fact that the school district had a number of talented and dedicated people in the central office to support standards implementation and a plan for doing so, competing demands for resources seemed to dilute the overall effort. Other professional development projects competed for space in which to meet as well as for the time of both these district personnel and the teachers. Along with the district curriculum writing and study groups, the district sponsored an early childhood program project, bilingual workshops, and a technology group, among others. Projects at the school level included Coalition of Essential Schools and Drug Free Schools programs, diversity training, writing

workshops, and unified planning committees. At times, teachers and administrators appeared overwhelmed. One teacher declined to attend one of the professional development sessions because he had already been away from his classes for two days in that week for other district and school assignments. When there is no integration between district and school projects or among various school projects, effects are not as powerful as they might otherwise be. Instead of addressing a list of parallel needs, administrators need to bring reform activities together into a unified design.

Implications

These preliminary research findings have implications for other districts that are instituting standards-based reform with English language learners. Some of the points have been made previously in the professional development literature but have not yet been translated into practice (Clair, 1998).

The research the LAB has conducted suggests that implementing standards will require significant investments of time. Teachers need time to understand what a document listing goals for student learning implies about the teaching and learning dynamic in culturally diverse classrooms. They need to examine and discuss their own beliefs and attitudes about teaching, student learning, and assessment. They need to develop a shared vision of what students should know and be able to do in a particular subject area at a particular grade level and how teachers can share responsibility for ensuring that students meet these standards. For teachers to engage in each of these processes takes more time than might be anticipated.

Implementation of standards-based reform also requires significant investment by school districts. The failure of teacher education programs to adequately prepare regular elementary and secondary classroom teachers to instruct linguistically and culturally diverse students (Clair, 1995; Crawford, 1993; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996; Zeichner, 1993) increases the burden on districts to offer in-service training to teachers who are implementing standards with these students. Even students who have exited from language support programs need additional assistance in mainstream classes to complete the assignments and continue their English language development. Raising the standards implies helping teachers redouble their efforts to support these students.

To create successful in-service professional development, administrators and professional developers must recognize the importance of letting adults set their own learning goals and participate in the design of their learning (Renyi, 1996). Teachers have deep understandings of the teaching and learning process in their classrooms in cases where outside observers may only scratch the surface. Therefore, teacher involvement in planning professional development is critical. Effective professional development must be a two-way process with both parties—the outside technical assistance providers and the teachers—bringing knowledge to the sessions and learning from one another.

This project was designed to counter typical professional development that brings in outside experts for a day or two to train teachers in certain "recipes" that may have little relationship to the school's needs. Not surprisingly in those cases, teachers may try out a recipe or two for a few days and then revert to their habitual practices. Instead, the long

term nature of the professional development allowed the LAB staff to learn about the district, the schools, and the teachers and then use that knowledge constructively with teachers to help them implement standards-based instruction with English language learners.

To implement standards effectively, districts must also utilize all the professional resources they possess. Our data revealed that teachers were not turning to their colleagues to ask for information about cultural phenomena, linguistic patterns, effective reading techniques, and so forth. This project helped to rectify that. Joint productive activity involving collaborative inquiry among ESL, bilingual, and content area teachers seems crucial to spreading the knowledge that already exists in schools. Furthermore, because the bureaucratic nature of schools and school districts favors fragmentation (Darling-Hammond, 1997), projects that are born in different departments tend not to work well together although they may complement each other conceptually. When engaged in several projects at once, even highly competent personnel and professionally active schools sometimes become drained.

Because it stands at the heart of the schools' mission to educate students, standards implementation can shape the running of schools on a daily basis, and it can serve as a foundation for other school reform activities. Yet for standards to play a powerful role, strong district leadership is needed to weave reform projects together and create conditions that encourage flexibility in the ongoing work of the system. Policy and practice must be linked in a reciprocal relationship that is reviewed regularly.

Conclusion

Standards-based reform involves students, teachers, administrators, parents, and policymakers in ways that can not be fully specified in advance. Lowell teachers have investigated a previously unexplored domain: the union of standards, instructional practice, and the educational needs of English language learners. Clearly, those most directly involved—teachers, schools, and districts—need professional support as they initiate reform, but what kind of support they need is not fully known.

In Lowell a self-discovery process has been initiated in which participants have begun to reveal their beliefs and practices and to examine ways of working with English language learners. To begin this work, researchers and district personnel have had to establish trust in each other and develop ways of working and learning together. The first year's work helped some teachers to refine their instructional practice so that it more directly addresses the goal of including English language learners in standards implementation. The implications for instruction across disciplines remain unclear, however. Does enhanced cultural and linguistic knowledge affect teachers' attitudes in ways that improve their relationships with students? Does this knowledge lead naturally to more appropriate instruction? If not, what supports would be required? These questions remain to be investigated. Nonetheless, the primary accomplishment of this project was developing the conditions for growth that may quite possibly be a prerequisite for change in practice.

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